

## Chapter Twelve

Luna Ayla

I followed my father's scent as I walked out of the pack house. My stomach twisted painfully from guilt. I don't want to hurt him. This should be a time to celebrate the birth of his sons. But I had to rip the bandaid off. I needed him to hear the truth from me.

I followed along the path until I saw him sitting in the back garden on a bench. The sky was getting darker and the stars were starting to shine.

"Dad?" I called out as I approached him. He was looking up at the sky. He didn't answer, he just patted the space beside him. I quickly took a seat, wanting to be close to him. I didn't want to stand there and have him change his mind.

"Sweetie, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have stormed off." He sighed, still looking up. I was taken aback by his apology.

"I should be the one apologizing to you. I never meant for any of this to happen." I told him, barely containing my sobs. He wrapped an arm around my shoulders, pulling me against his side.

"You don't need to apologize or feel guilty about what happened, sweetie. Your mother was going to do what she wanted and there was nothing that was going to stop her. It's one of the many reasons I fell in love with her. Her determination. The same determination I see in you," he said. I shook my head against the shoulder I was leaning on.

"I'm a mess, Dad. And how Nate is still by my side, I don't know. He deserves so much more than I can give him." I confessed.

"And what do you think he deserves?" He questioned.

"A Luna. A family. A wife. And all he got was a complete mess of a mermaid s\*\*\*h wolf who claimed another male." I exclaimed. I stood up and started to pace in front of him.

"Sweetie, slow down, what other male?"

"My wolf claimed Xander, Dad. And when I went to the Black Pearl temple in the Northern Kingdom, I didn't get any fucken answers. None. I told Nate I would never claim anyone else. But what if something happens? I'm so confused and conicted. I feel like I trapped Nate and now he is stuck with me forever." I ranted while pacing, throwing my arms around in frustration.

"I'm such a horrible person," I stopped and announced. I'm a terrible human being and this is my karma.

"Sweetie, have you told any of this to Nate?" My father asked softly. He reached over and grabbed my hand.

"I told him I would never claim another. I would never bind anyone to me. Xander would never be able to have a family and I could never do that to him. Or to Nate. But I'm scared. The Moon Goddess warned me that the bond was there for my army to stay loyal. But I don't want them to be loyal because it would cause them pain. I want them to be loyal because they believe in what I'm ghting for. They believe in me," I sighed.

"You've been dealing with a lot," he breathed out. I could only nod as I tried to hold down my emotions.

He tugged me back to sit beside him, wrapping his arms around me. I relaxed into him, feeling safe.

"Not being there for you when you needed me is my greatest regret. But one thing I do know is your mother loved you. And she did everything she could to protect you from this life. I didn't see it before. I know you think she should have prepared you but she didn't want you to be a part of this. And I now understand why. This is so much for anyone to handle. Sweetie, I know you can do it. And Nate will be by your side. Keep communicating. You do not have to do this alone." He kissed my temple.

We sat in silence, watching the sky darken and more stars became visible.

I reached out to Nate through the link when I felt his emotions bleeding into mine. He felt hurt and angry. And my heart twisted painfully, knowing I was the cause. I told him I'd be on the beta oor soon.

"How is your sister?" My father asked, breaking the silence between us.

"She's doing well. Healthy. Matt and Julia just adore her. Matt says she looks just like me." I smiled, remembering the moment.

"Matt always wanted a house full of kids, but after their son, Julia just couldn't carry another child. Thank you for giving them the joys of another baby. Matt fought Melody hard to have you in his life. I should have fought like he did. Maybe things would have been different."

"Maybe. But we can't go back. All we can do is live in the moment and be better than who we were yesterday." I told him.

"I think you need to follow your advice, Ayla. Talk with Nate and be better than who you were yesterday." I sighed before nodding my head.

"Rosie is excited about meeting her big sister." I smiled. I was excited about meeting my sister and brothers.

"Thank you, Dad. You have no idea how much it means to me to be a part of your family."

"This will always be your family, Ayla. Just don't make me a grandpa too soon," he chuckled, and I let out a giggle.

"I'll keep that in mind."

"Go, I'll see you in the morning." I leaned up and kissed his cheek before wrapping my arms around his neck.

"I love you. Goodnight, Dad," I mumbled into his neck.

"I love you, sweetie."

I walked back into the pack house feeling better than I had felt in days. Now I just needed to voice everything I was feeling to Nate. No pressure.